

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY AF:MLGARRISON

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S/S-MR.SEBASTIAN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR AMBASSADOR ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT GENEVA 8446 ACTION SECSTATE 28 OCT 76

QUOTE

S E C R E T GENEVA 8446

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR RH UK

SUBJECT: RHODESIAN CONFERENCE: DIFFICULT BRITISH MEETINGS OCT 27

FOR SCHAUFLE FROM WISNER

1. AMBASSADOR RICHARD MET OCT 27 WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE TOGETHER AND LATER WITH SMITH AND HIS CABINET MINISTERS. RELATIVE BRITISH OPTIMISM OF YESTERDAY MORNING DIMINISHED AS DAY PROGRESSED. THE MEETINGS LEFT RICHARD UNEASY AND LESS OPTIMISTIC. IN AFTERNOON BACKGROUND BRIEFING TO JOURNALISTS HE SAID THAT AT MIDDAY HE THOUGH THERE WAS A 60-40 CHANCE OF SUCCESS FOR THE CONFERENCE BUT AFTER THE NKOMO-MUGABE MEETING HE HAD LOWERED THE FIGURE TO 50-50. HIS ODDS MAY HAVE DECLINED EVEN MORE AFTER HIS ENCOUNTER WITH SMITH

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LATER IN THE EVENING. ACCOUNTS OF THE MEETINGS WERE GIVEN TO US

BY ROBIN BYATT OF RICHARD'S STAFF.

2. RICHARD HAD WANTED TO MEET INDIVIDUALLY WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE IN ORDER TO BEGIN SERIOUS PLANNING OF STRATEGY WITH NKOMO. HOWEVER, AFTER CONSIDERABLE TO AND FROING MUGABE AND NKOMO INSISTED ON COMING TOGETHER. THE MEETING GOT OFF TO A BAD START WITH RICHARD RESPONDING IN CATEGORICAL TERMS TO THEIR INSISTENCE THAT BRITAIN REASSUME DIRECT COLONIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RHODESIA. THE MEETING THEN DEVELOPED INTO A "FRIGHTFUL ROW" WITH THE NATIONALISTS ACCUSING THE BRITISH OF RENEGING ON PROMISES AND SELLING THE AFRICANS DOWN THE RIVER. FURTHER BATTLE ENSUED AS NKOMO AND MUGABE DEMANDED A BRITISH MINISTER TO OPEN THE CONFERENCE AND CASTIGATED RICHARD OVER THE ISSUE OF MONEY FOR THEIR DELEGATIONS IN GENEVA. NKOMO AND MUGABE THEN STORMED OUT OF THE MEETING CLAIMING THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO RECONSIDER THEIR ENTIRE POSITIONS. BRITISH NOW FEEL THAT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AT CONFERENCE OPENING SCHEDULED FOR 3 P.M. LOCAL TIME OCT 28 THE NKOMO-MUGABE PATRIOTIC FRONT MIGHT BE REPRESENTED BY SECOND ECHELON PEOPLE.

3. RICHARD MOVED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TO PUT TOGETHER THE BROKEN PIECES. HE MET WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT AND OF THE THREE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS WHO ARE HERE (BOTSWANA, ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA). THE TEAM OF OBSERVERS THEN WENT TO THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL TO SEE IF THEY COULD PATCH THINGS UP. WE EXPECT A REPORT THIS MORNING ON THEIR EFFORTS.

4. THE MEETING WITH SMITH LATER IN THE EVENING WAS EQUALLY DISTURBING TO THE BRITISH. RICHARD FOUND HIMSELF CONFRONTED BY SMITH AND ALL THE RHODESIAN MINISTERS PRESENT IN GENEVA. THE BRITISH DESCRIBED THE MEETING AS LONG, INCONCLUSIVE AND DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO NON-SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS. ONLY CONFERENCE FORMALITIES WERE DISCUSSED AND THERE WERE HOT DEBATES ON SUBJECTS SUCH AS NAMETAGS AND SEATING. SMITH INSISTED ON HAVING MORE OF HIS DELEGATION FLANKING HIM AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE. A PRINCIPAL PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE WHAT THE SMITH DELEGATION WILL CALL ITSELF. SMITH INSISTED ON A NAMEPLATE IN FRONT OF HIS CHAIR WITH THE TITLE "PRIME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT OF RHODESIA" INSCRIBED ON IT. RICHARD NOTED THE PROBLEMS THIS WOULD CAUSE. SMITH RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD WRITE HIS OWN NAMEPLATE IF HE HAD TO. RICHARD REJOINED THAT IF SMITH DID SO, HE WOULD ADJOURN THE CONFERENCE AT WHICH POINT SMITH BACKED OFF

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THE TOPIC. THE MEETING PROCEEDED IN THAT VEIN, WITH SUBSTANTIAL BICKERING, UNTIL SMITH HAD APPARENTLY SAID ALL HE WANTED TO, THANKED RICHARD, AND GOT UP AND LEFT.

CATO. UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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